

Latest Updates from the NCGA



From Sen. Natasha Marcus <natasha.marcus@ncleg.gov>
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NC Senate District 41 Newsletter

February 9, 2024

Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Justice and Public Safety Meeting



On Thursday, I attended the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Justice and Public Safety meeting, where we heard and discussed four presentations relating to cybersecurity and juvenile justice in North Carolina.

The first two presentations were by representatives from a cybersecurity company, Fortinet, and the North Carolina National Guard's Cyber Security Response Force. These presentations were used to provide context for budget allocations to the task force for the creation of 25 new positions in satellite locations across the state. As online infrastructure has grown more complex, it has also grown more vulnerable to attack. Additionally, the development of artificial intelligence has led to more targeted and automated ways to launch cyber attacks. Malware, ransomware, phishing, cross-platform profiling, and AI-enhanced voice impersonation are all real threats to data stored online. Advanced persistent threat groups have become more sophisticated and are able to launch more complex attacks, as evidenced by the increase in the infection rate of ransomware. The rate at which ransomware can infect a network has increased from 5.5 days in 2021 to less than 24 hours in 2023. The National Guard's Cyber Security Task Force outlined multiple lines of effort and threat analysis procedures, as well as detailed exercises to develop and train cyber elements, threat analysis teams, incident handlers, reporting mechanisms, and leaders.

The third presentation explored the future of juvenile detention in North Carolina and reviewed the current detention capacity throughout the state. The number of minors charged with violent crimes has continued to increase since 2021, rising 9% between 2021 and 2022. Nonviolent firearm offenses, such as possession of a handgun by a minor and larceny of a firearm, increased by 26%. Read more [here](#).

Juvenile Non-Violent Firearm Offenses

Since last fiscal year, NC juvenile non-violent firearm offenses for ages 7 to 17 increased 26% (929 to 1,149).

Statewide	Age 7-12	13	14	15	16	17	Total
FY21	41	94	180	424	707	929	2,381
FY22	83	115	308	530	819	1,149	3,008

Durham	Age 7-12	13	14	15	16	17	Total
FY21	0			24	26	43	97
FY22			9	26	14	48	102

Wake	Age 7-12	13	14	15	16	17	Total
FY21			5	9	31	37	87
FY22			12	31	53	48	151

Includes such offenses as Possess handgun by minor, Larceny of a firearm, Possess stolen firearm, Carrying concealed gun (m), Carrying concealed weapon
 Chart: David Raynor • Source: NC Department of Public Safety • Created with Datawrapper

In correlation with the rise in crime seen between 2021 and 2022, the percentage of juveniles admitted to secure custody has increased by 21% since 2021 and 12% between 2022 and 2023. Mecklenburg's facility was closed in 2022. This has caused a strain on the capacity of detention centers throughout the state. On January 26, 2024, the bed capacity across the state was exceeded by 18. Direct care staff vacancy rates averaged around 40% but were as high as 72% in some facilities. [This staffing shortage has had dire consequences for youth detained in these facilities](#) and has sometimes resulted in solitary confinement-like conditions for minors. The presentation addressed some of these issues and proposed solutions, such as the ongoing review of funding needs, increasing the number of centers, development of potential resources, a step-pay plan, retention bonuses, provisional offers, and temporary solutions such as employee reclassification and the use of staffing agencies.

The final presentation discussed the implementation of [HB186](#), Juvenile Justice Modification/DOI Expenses/Technical Changes, a bill passed earlier this year that allows youth between the ages of 13 and 17 to be tried as adults for certain serious crimes. This makes several changes to the 2017 "Raise the Age" law that was designed to decrease the number of offenders below the age of 18 tried as adults in North Carolina. HB186 automatically moves young offenders to superior court if indicted by a grand jury, to be tried as adults. According to the presenter, the North Carolina Conference of District Attorneys counsel Chuck Spahos, the new law has been misunderstood by some juvenile judges and may need clarification when the short session begins in April. Read more [here](#).

Senate Page Program Applications Open for 2024



The Senate page program is open to students in tenth, eleventh, or twelfth grade during the 2023-24 school year. If you are interested in applying to be a page in my office, please reach out to my Legislative Assistant, [Sarah Reynolds](#), via email. The program will likely be offered April 29 - June 27, though these dates are subject to change. Each Senator may appoint up to two pages. Availability of weeks is based on a first-come, first-served basis, so I encourage the students who are eligible to apply early if they are interested in a specific week. Parents/guardians of pages will be responsible for securing lodging during the time their child serves.

The [Senate Page website](#) is a great resource for learning more about the page program. The site includes general information about the application process, weekly schedule, and many other frequently asked questions. Available weeks and closed weeks will also be updated on the site.

Medical Cost Containment Reports



As a member of the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Justice and Public Safety, I received the final quarterly report from North Carolina's Division of Juvenile Justice in the Department of Public Safety for 2023. These reports are pursuant to the new statutory authority found in [G.S. 143B-802\(c\)](#). Some of the most salient details are below:

- The number of juveniles with billing claims for treatment or diagnosis increased from the third quarter to the fourth. The third quarter saw 23 juveniles treated, and the fourth saw 30.
- In the fourth quarter, 40% of services provided to juveniles were conducted by contract hospitals.
- One juvenile received inpatient hospital services.
- All hospitals comply with the mandated rates of two times Medicaid rate or seventy percent of prevailing rates.

All four quarterly reports are available to the public [here](#). The reports provide additional data regarding the billing claims submitted and include a full list of contracted providers across the state, with the rate of each provider's billed charges.

Safe Drinking Water and Lead Water Lines



Lead is a neurotoxin. The EPA Action Level in drinking water is 15 parts per billion. It applies to public water supplies only, not private wells. However, water lines containing lead can be found under many residences in North Carolina. These lines are still in service, potentially carrying contaminated drinking water into homes. Children are especially vulnerable to lead poisoning and can suffer irreversible brain damage. Though lead service lines were primarily installed from the late 1800s to the 1940s, the State Plumbing Code did not ban the use of lead in water service lines in North Carolina until March 1987.

The North Carolina Division of Water Infrastructure received \$87 million from Congress to offset the cost of addressing this issue. Of that, it has awarded \$47.5 million in loans and grants to nearly 60 public water systems to inventory, find, and replace lead service lines. **The goal is to eliminate all lead-containing service lines nationwide in 10 years.** Read more [here](#).

Senator Marcus in the Community



I attended a reception hosted by [CLEANcarolinas](#) with guests from the NC Department of Commerce and Union workers serving on the NC Towers Task Force project board last week at the Discovery Place Science Museum in Charlotte. The event brought together a variety of individuals working to advance offshore wind deployment. It was great to meet with Secretary of Commerce Machel Baker Sanders, as well as listen to her remarks on the new industry and job creation that utilizing wind would bring to North Carolina. I also enjoyed the presentations by UNCC students about harnessing renewable energy from ocean waves and wind.



I attended a lunch in honor of International Holocaust Remembrance Day hosted by the Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte. We heard from two Holocaust survivors, Irving Bienstock and Suly Chenkin, who shared their moving stories with the local elected officials in attendance, including Mr. Bienstock's memories of living through Kristallnacht with his mother and siblings.

February 15: Celebrate Black History Month at Mountain Island Library



On February 15, genealogy Librarian Danielle Pritchett will present Black Genealogy: Moving Beyond the 1870 Census in the Robinson-Spangler Carolina Room at Mountain Island Library (4420 Hoyt Galvin Way, Charlotte, NC 28214). This is an opportunity to explore crucial historical records and learn about effective strategies to trace lineage before 1865. This event is suitable for older teens and adults. Learn more [here](#).

February 20: Community Awareness Event with Davidson Police and the Charlotte FBI Civil Rights Division



The Town of Davidson Police Department will host a Community Awareness presentation and Q&A session with the Charlotte FBI Civil Rights Division on Tuesday, February 20, from 6:00 – 7:30 PM in the Davidson Town Hall and Community Center Auditorium located at 251 South Street. All members of the Davidson community are welcome and encouraged to attend. The presentation will explore how the FBI works to protect fundamental rights.

No RSVP is necessary to attend. For more information, please email the [Davidson Police Department](#) or call (704) 892-513.

The Ada Jenkins Center Offers Help With Your Taxes



The [Ada Jenkins Center](#) is hosting three sites for Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) and Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE). These three sites will be hosted in Davidson, Cornelius, and Huntersville. **Tax preparation is available and provided for free for individuals who made \$60,000 or less in 2023. Appointments are required.** The schedule for the tax season is listed below:

Saturdays from 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM

- [Ada Jenkins Center Appointment Link](#) (212 Gamble Street, Davidson, NC 28036)
- [Charlotte Mecklenburg North County Regional Library Appointment Link](#) (16500 Holly Crest Lane, Huntersville, NC 28078)

Thursdays from 5:00 - 7:00 PM

- [First Baptist Church of Cornelius Appointment Link](#) (21017 Catawba Avenue, Cornelius, NC 28031)

If you have questions, email the [VITA Program](#) or call/text **(704) 765-6195**. Read more [here](#).

North Carolina Teaching Fellows Program Applications Open Through February 18th



NC Teaching Fellows Newsletter

Be a part of the legacy.
Be a part of a brighter future.

TEACHING FELLOWS ON THE MOVE



Delaney Goard is a senior at UNC Chapel Hill with plans to teach Elementary Education. She will serve as NCTF's intern for the spring semester. Delaney will be working to build the NCTF alumni network in addition to other special projects. Welcome Delaney!

Delaney Goard
NCTF Intern

IN THE NEWS

NCTF Welcomes 130 awardees during Early Action Selection
Congratulations to the New Fellows!
[Press Release](#)

School Districts Selected to Participate in NCTF Pilot Program. Each participating district will receive \$50,000 toward recruitment
[Press Release](#)

Upcoming Events

NCTF Statewide Meeting
2/7/2024 via Zoom

Application Deadline:
February 18th, 2024

What You Need to Apply

- TWO Letters of Recommendation
- Gain admission to one of our partner institutions
- College Student with a 2.7 GPA, high school senior with a 3.0 unweighted GPA
- Be willing to teach STEM, Special Education, or Elementary Education



Connect with Us!

Contact:
ncteachingfellows@northcarolina.edu

Applications to the [North Carolina Teaching Fellows Program](#) are open now through February 18. The program allows eligible beginning teachers to receive up to \$5,000 per semester in financial aid, study at one of ten select educator preparation programs, and access to a strong program alumni network and New Teacher Support Program. In order to apply, applicants must have two letters of recommendation, gain admission to one of the program's partner institutions, be a college student with a 2.7 GPA or a high school senior with a 3.0 unweighted GPA, and be willing to teach STEM, Special Education, or Elementary Education. Frequently asked questions regarding the application process and eligibility can be found [here](#). Apply [here](#).

Lowe's Hometowns Grant Program Applications Open Through February 19



Lowe's Home Improvement is accepting project nominations for the third year of Lowe's Hometowns, a program designed to revitalize community spaces. Any type of project that involves the physical improvement or renovation of a community space is eligible. All grants must go to a local nonprofit that is willing and able to take on the project. Project areas include community resources/space, safe affordable housing, cultural preservation, area revitalization, and skilled trades education initiatives. Nominate a project [here](#). Nominations close February 19.

Recycle Damaged Books



Books that are not suitable for donation, are out of date, or are damaged can be brought to Mecklenburg County's full-service drop-off centers for recycling. Please remove any plastic inserts or compact discs first. Then, drop your hardback and paperback books directly in the special collection boxes at any of [the four disposal and recycling centers](#) - no plastic bags! If you have children's books that are in good condition, there are separate bins for children's books at all full-service centers that go right back into the community.

Critical Blood Shortage and How to Donate



The American Red Cross has issued a national blood shortage alert. The organization says blood donations have dropped to their lowest levels in 20 years, including in Charlotte. In Charlotte, the blood inventory is critically low, especially for O-negative, O-positive, and B-negative blood types. O-negative and O-positive are what hospitals use most. Winter storms forced the cancellation of more than 530 American Red Cross blood drives in January, meaning the Red Cross canceled nearly as many blood drives last month as the organization did in all of 2023. To find a blood drive near you and make your appointment to donate, enter your zip code [here](#). Read more [here](#) and [here](#).

SAFE Charlotte Grant Applications Open Through March 15

SAFE Charlotte

This grant provides funding to Charlotte-based nonprofits that address violence in the community for both the implementation of their programs and for collaboration between organizations in order to layer services to help support residents. The SAFE grant application is now open and will close on March 15. Charlotte is prioritizing proposals that include evidence-based or informed programs that prevent youth crime. Eligible organizations must be 501(c)(3) certified, provide service in Charlotte, and must be collaborative groups comprised of one lead agency and one or two partner agencies. Programmatic areas include youth and family-based programs, child care services, workforce development/job training, and mental health and trauma-informed care.

An optional review session will be held virtually on February 15. Please visit [this website](#) to review more detailed criteria, sign up for the listening session, apply, and answer any frequently asked questions you may have.

East Charlotte Utility Assistance Applications Open

CharlotteEAST

[CharlotteEAST](#) has relaunched its utility assistance program with help from [United Neighborhoods](#). To be eligible, applicants must demonstrate the need for assistance paying electric, natural gas, or water bills, must live in zip code 28215, 28205, or 28212, and their annual family income must be less than (*per number of members in household*):

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
\$41,880	\$47,880	\$53,880	\$59,820	\$64,620	\$69,420	\$74,220	\$79,020

The program will provide up to \$250 per eligible household while funds last. Bills need not be past due in order to gain assistance. For questions or support, email the organization [here](#). The application is available in English [here](#) and in Spanish [here](#).

2024 North Carolina Awards Nominations Open Until April 1



Nominations are being accepted for the 2024 North Carolina Award, the highest civilian honor bestowed by the state, now through April 1. The 2024 North Carolina Award recipients will be honored at an event later this year. Past award recipients have included distinguished artists, poets, writers, performers, journalists, scientists, and public servants.

Administered by the North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, the award recognizes “notable accomplishments by North Carolina citizens” in the fields of literature, science, fine arts and public service.

Award nominations may be submitted by anyone. The [nomination form](#) is available online. To receive forms by mail or e-mail, contact [Jennifer Fontes](#) or call **(919) 814-6756**. After reviewing the initial nominations, the North Carolina Awards Committee will request additional information from nominators as needed. The committee will make its final selections this summer. Learn more [here](#).

Town of Davidson Civics 101 Program Applications Open



[Civics 101](#) is a ten-week program designed to educate citizens interested in learning more about the town's municipal government. The session is open to those who live or work within Davidson's town limits or within the extra-territorial jurisdiction (ETJ), who are 18 and older, and who have not taken the class previously. There is no cost to attend. Those who qualify and are interested in participating should submit their registration form by 5:00 PM on Tuesday, February 20. The course is designed to be interactive and entertaining and offers content regarding the work being accomplished within the Town Strategic Plan.

Online applications are available [here](#). Hard copy applications are available in the main lobby of the Davidson Town Hall & Community Center, 251 South Street.

There will be a welcome event for registered participants on Saturday, March 9, and classes will begin at the Town Hall & Community Center on Thursday, March 14, continuing through May. They meet each Thursday with the exception of April 4. Applicants can choose to sign up for either a morning class from 9:30 to 11:30 AM, or an evening class from 6:00 to 8:00 PM. Classes will conclude with a combined 7:00 p.m. session on Thursday, May 21, with the Davidson Board of Commissioners.

First National Bank Accused of Discriminatory Lending in Charlotte and Winston-Salem



The State of North Carolina and First National Bank have agreed to a \$13.5 million settlement as part of the conclusion of the case against the bank accused of discriminatory lending practices. North Carolina Attorney General Josh Stein argued that the bank had engaged in redlining, or the systematic denial of financial services to residents of certain areas based on their race or ethnicity. First National Bank will invest \$11.75 million in a loan subsidy fund and open two new branches in Charlotte and Winston-Salem Black neighborhoods as part of the settlement. Read more [here](#).

March 16: Monteith Park First Annual 5K and Kids' K

MONTEITH PARK 1ST ANNUAL

5K & KIDS K

RUN/WALK

JOIN US FOR MONTEITH PARK'S FIRST ANNUAL 5K! OUR 5K IS MORE THAN A RUN - IT'S A COMMUNITY COMING TOGETHER TO SUPPORT A COURAGEOUS POLICE OFFICER BATTLING CANCER, OFFICER BILL BROADWAY. EVERY STEP, EVERY DONATION MAKES A DIFFERENCE. LACE UP AND BE PART OF THIS COMMUNITY-DRIVEN EFFORT TO UPLIFT AND STAND STRONG WITH OUR LOCAL HERO.



8:30AM KIDS 1K BEGINS- PLEASE ARRIVE 15 MINUTES EARLY
9:00AM 5K BEGINS - PLEASE ARRIVE 15 MINUTES EARLY
FRIENDLY DOGS ARE WELCOME TO JOIN!

 **SATURDAY MARCH 16TH**  **MONTEITH PARK CLUBHOUSE**

QUESTIONS? CONTACT LAUREN FOX 704-252-4442

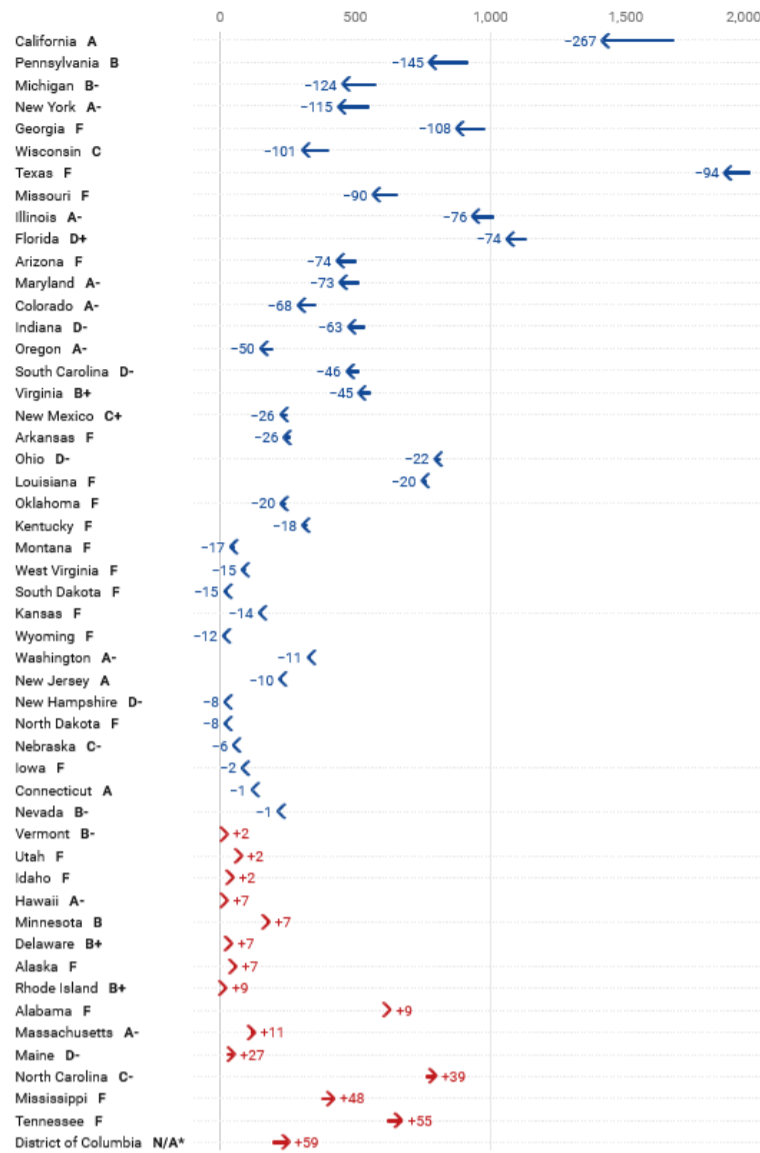
On March 16, Monteith Park (15245 Waterfront Drive, Huntersville, NC 28078) will host a 5K fundraising event for Huntersville Police Department's Officer Bill Broadway, who is fighting cancer. This event is for everyone! Friendly dogs are welcome. The Kids' 1K event begins at 8:30 AM, and the 5K begins at 9:00 AM. Register [here](#).

Historic Decrease in Gun Violence Across The Country in 2023



According to preliminary data, homicides decreased as much as 12% in 2023 compared with 2022 in more than 175 cities. Though this decrease is historic, gun violence increased dramatically throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, and 2021 saw a record number of homicides by gun. Additionally, the 2023 national murder rate is estimated to still be above levels recorded before the pandemic.

Total gun homicides for all 50 states and the District of Columbia matched with their state grade from the Giffords Law Center, 2022–2023



There were 1,574 fewer gun homicides nationally in 2023 than in 2022.

* Giffords does not grade the District of Columbia in its scorecard rating system.

Chart: Center for American Progress

Of the 300 largest U.S. cities, cities in states with the strongest gun laws experienced 19.4% fewer total gun homicides in 2023 than in 2022, while cities in states with the weakest gun laws saw only 5.1% fewer total gun homicides. **Notably, North Carolina is near the bottom of the list, with a C- grade.** Charlotte saw only a 9.7% decrease in gun violence. This session, I filed [SB210](#), the Gun Violence Prevention Act, designed to decrease the amount of gun violence in North Carolina through sensible limitations and permit requirements. Read more [here](#).

COVID Updates and Information



Every home in the U.S. is eligible to order an additional four free at-home tests. If you did not order tests last Fall, you may place two orders for a total of eight tests. Your order of COVID tests is completely free, including shipping. Order your free at-home tests [here](#), or call 1-800-232-0233 for help.

Financial Update on the State's General Fund

Beginning Cash, Friday, January 26	16,542,292,584.06
Add Receipts:	
Tax and Non-Tax Receipts	572,630,665.80
Coronavirus Relief Receipts	0.00
Other Receipts	2,253,413,701.09
Less Disbursements:	
Payroll	777,941,184.99
State Aid	182,826,242.29
Medicaid/Other Provider Payments	333,529,491.02
Tax Refunds/Distributions	33,080,826.39
Debt Service	0.00
Coronavirus Relief Transfers Out	0.00
General Operating	4,958,128,639.15
Ending Cash, Friday, February 02	13,082,830,567.11
Less Reserved Cash:	
Due to Local Governments – Sales and Use Tax Payable	992,976,513.21
Other Reserves	37,639,722.17
American Recovery Plan Act Reserve	37,740,434.28
Carry Forward Reserve	256,300,095.32
Clean Water Drinking Water Reserve	1,000,000,000.00
Coronavirus Capital Projects Reserve	0.00
Coronavirus Relief Reserve	0.00
Earthquake Disaster Recovery Reserve	0.00
Economic Development Project Reserve	256,200,000.00
Federal Infrastructure Match Reserve	121,758,723.00
Housing Reserve	0.00
Hurricane Florence Disaster Recovery Reserve	57,418,684.56
Information Technology Reserve	108,961,174.00
Local Fiscal Recovery Reserve-ARPA	0.00
Local Govt Coronavirus Relief Reserve	0.00
Local Project Reserve	0.00
Medicaid Contingency Reserve	326,512,736.00
Medicaid Transformation Reserve	160,642,170.00
NC GREAT Reserve	0.00
NC Innovation Reserve	0.00
Opioid Abatement Reserve	9,257,779.43
Public School Contingency Reserve	0.00
Public School Need Based Capital Reserve	0.00
Reg Economic Dev Reserve	4,650,000.00
Repairs and Renovations Reserve	0.00
Retiree Supplement Reserve	145,600,000.00
SCIF General Fund Reserve	0.00
Savings Reserve	4,750,001,113.98
Stabilization and Inflation Reserve	1,000,000,000.00
State Emergency Response/Disaster Reserve	671,064,393.53
Transportation Reserve	0.00
Unfunded Liability Solvency Reserve	10,000,000.00
Wilmington Harbor Enhancements Reserve	283,800,000.00
World University Games Reserve	0.00
Unreserved Cash Balance, Friday, February 02	2,852,307,027.63

The Office of the State Controller (OSC) released the General Fund Cash Watch numbers for the week ending Friday, February 2. OSC provides a weekly update on the State’s General Fund cash position which can be found at osc.nc.gov. **The current unreserved cash balance in state coffers is \$2.852 billion.**

The State Controller is North Carolina’s chief fiscal officer and serves as an independent resource to ensure the financial integrity of the State.

Links to Helpful Information

Domestic Violence Hotline: If you or someone you know is experiencing domestic violence or partner abuse, please call [Safe Alliance](#) at **704-332-2513** and they can help you.

Mecklenburg's County Bar [website](#) provides a list of pro bono resources for those unable to afford legal counsel.

Mecklenburg's Department of Community Resources provides individuals and families with [immediate access](#) to a diverse range of Mecklenburg County Health and Human Services programs and community partner services in Community Resources Centers throughout the County.

Mecklenburg's Energy Assistance Programs: Do you need help paying your heating or cooling bills? Mecklenburg offers [two different programs](#) to help eligible low-income households with their energy needs.

Property Tax values and histories in Mecklenburg County can be searched on [this site](#) that includes links to Polaris and information about past assessments. You can find more detailed information on real estate values on the [Mecklenburg](#) site.

Suicide Prevention: If you have thoughts of harming yourself, **please call or text 988**, the Suicide Prevention Hotline for help.

Unclaimed Cash! Visit [NCCash.com](#) today to see if you have unclaimed property under the supervision of the NC Treasurer's office. More info [here](#).

Voter Information: You can find your current information on the [NC Voter Lookup page](#).

Free Property Tax Assistance Services



Do you need help with your property taxes? The [Charlotte Center for Legal Advocacy](#) is providing free assistance to help homeowners prepare their NC property tax relief applications. Call **980-256-7952** or visit their website to learn more [here](#).

Contact Our Office

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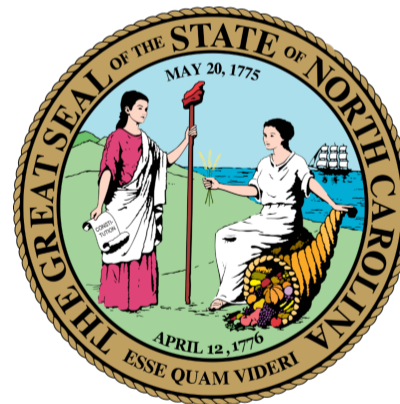
Sara

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Rm. 519

Raleigh, NC 27603



How can we help you? Let us know and [reach out](#) to our office! We want to hear from you.

Senator Natasha Marcus | [Website](#)



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